



Walker's Appeal
David Walker (1829-1830)

David Walker was a freeborn African American, originally from North Carolina, who resettled as an adult in Massachusetts. There, in 1829, he published a pamphlet, which came to be known as Walker's Appeal, in which he vehemently denounced slavery. He published two expanded editions the following year; the excerpts below come from the final edition. In some southern states, governments implemented measures to prevent Walker's Appeal from being distributed, for fear that the pamphlet would inspire slave uprisings. Walker died soon after publishing the final edition of the Appeal, most likely from tuberculosis; but there were suspicions, at the time, that slaveholders had had him poisoned.

[The gospel mingled with blood and oppression]

God, through his instrument Moses, handed a dispensation of his divine will to the children of Israel after they had left Egypt for the land of Canaan (or land of promise), who, through hypocrisy, oppression, and unbelief, departed from the faith. He then, by his apostles, handed a dispensation of his, together with the will of Jesus Christ, to the Europeans in Europe, who, in open violation of which, have made *merchandise* of us, and it does appear as though they take this very dispensation to aid them in their *infernal* depredations upon us. Indeed, the way in which religion was and is conducted by the Europeans and their descendants, one might believe it was a plan fabricated by themselves and the *devils* to oppress us. But hark! My Master has taught me better than to believe it—he has taught me that his gospel, as it was preached by himself and his apostles, remains the same, notwithstanding Europe has tried to mingle blood and oppression with it.

It is well known to the Christian world that Bartholomew Las Casas—that very, very notoriously avaricious Catholic priest, or preacher, and adventurer with Columbus in his second voyage—proposed to his countrymen, the Spaniards in Hispaniola, to import the Africans from the Portuguese settlement in Africa to dig up gold and silver and work their plantations for them [...] This wretch (“Las Casas, the Preacher”) succeeded so well in his plans of oppression that in 1503, the first blacks had been imported into the New World. [...] Thus, we see, through the instrumentality of a pretended preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, our common Master, our wretchedness first commenced in America—where it has been continued from 1503 to this day, 1829, a period of 326 years; but 209 years from 1620, when twenty of our fathers were brought into Jamestown, Virginia, by a Dutch man-of-war and sold off like brutes to the highest bidders [...]


The Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans try to make proselytes to their religions; and whatever human beings adopt their religions, they extend to them their protection. But Christian Americans not only hinder their fellow creatures, the Africans, but thousands of them *will absolutely beat a colored person nearly to death if they catch him on his knees supplicating the throne of grace*. [...] I have known small collections of colored people to have convened together for no other purpose than to worship God Almighty in spirit and in truth, to the best of their knowledge, when tyrants calling themselves *patrols* would also convene and wait, almost in

breathless silence, for the poor colored people to commence singing and praying to the Lord our God; as soon as they had commenced, the wretches would burst in upon them and drag them out and commence beating them as they would rattlesnakes—many of whom they would beat so unmercifully that they would hardly be able to crawl for weeks and sometimes for months. Yet the American ministers send out missionaries to convert the heathen, while they keep us and our children sunk at their feet in the most abject ignorance and wretchedness that ever a people was afflicted with since the world began. [...]

Our divine Lord and Master said, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” But an American minister, with the Bible in his hand, holds us and our children in the most abject slavery and wretchedness. Now, I ask them: Would they like for us to hold them and their children in abject slavery and wretchedness? [...] I have known pretended preachers of the gospel of my Master who not only held us as their natural inheritance, but treated us with as much rigor as any infidel or Deist in the world—just as though they were intent only on taking our blood and groans to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. [...] I remember a camp meeting in South Carolina [...] where [...] to my no ordinary astonishment, our reverend gentleman got up and told us (colored people) that slaves must be obedient to their masters—must do their duty to their masters or be whipped—the whip was made for the backs of fools, etc. Here I pause for a moment, to give the world time to consider what was my surprise to hear such preaching from a minister of my Master, whose very gospel is that of peace and not of blood and whips, as this pretended preacher tried to make us believe. [...]

[Will the Lord suffer this people to go on much longer?]

Perhaps they will laugh at or make light of this; but I tell you, Americans! that unless you speedily alter your course, *you and your country are gone!!!!!!* For God Almighty will tear up the very face of the earth!!! [...] Do you think that our blood is hidden from the Lord, because you can hide it from the rest of the world by sending out missionaries and by your charitable deeds to the Greeks, Irish, etc.? [...]

 ADDITION: The preachers and people of the United States form societies against Freemasonry and intemperance, and write against Sabbath-breaking, Sabbath mails, infidelity, etc., etc. But the fountainhead, compared with which all those other evils are comparatively nothing, and from the bloody and murderous head of which they receive no trifling support, is hardly noticed by the Americans. This is a fair illustration of the state of society in this country—it shows what a bearing *avarice* has upon a people, when they are nearly given up by the Lord to a hard heart and a reprobate mind in consequence of afflicting their fellow creatures. God suffers some to go on until they are ruined forever!!!!!! Will it be the case with the whites of the United States of America? We hope not—we would not wish to see them destroyed, notwithstanding they have and do now treat us more cruelly than any people have treated another on this earth since it came from the hands of its Creator (with the exception of the French and the Dutch; they treat us nearly as badly as the Americans of the United States). The will of God must, however, in spite of us, *be done*.

The English are the best friends the colored people have upon earth. Though they have oppressed us a little and have colonies now in the West Indies which oppress us *sorely*, yet notwithstanding,

they (the English) have done one hundred times more for the melioration of our condition than all the other nations of the earth put together. [...] We have here and there, in other nations, good friends. But as a nation, the English are our friends. ☞

How can the preachers and people of America believe the Bible? Does it teach them any distinction on account of a man's color? Hearken, Americans! to the injunctions of our Lord and Master to his humble followers. [...] They do not show the slightest degree of distinction. "Go ye, therefore," says my divine Master, "and teach all nations"—or in other words, all people—"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Do you understand the above, Americans? [...] Have you been to Africa, teaching the inhabitants thereof the words of the Lord Jesus, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"? Have you not, on the contrary, entered among us and learnt us the art of throat-cutting by setting us to fight, one against another, to take each other as prisoners of war and sell to you for small bits of calicoes, old swords, knives, etc., to make slaves for you and your children? This being done, have you not brought us among you in chains and handcuffs, like brutes, and treated us with all the cruelties and rigor your ingenuity could invent, consistent with the laws of your country, which (for the blacks) are tyrannical enough? Can the American preachers appeal unto God, the Maker and Searcher of hearts, and tell him, with the Bible in their hands, that they make no distinction on account of men's color? [...] If they cannot do it in the affirmative, have they not departed from the Lord Jesus Christ, their Master?

[...] I am awfully afraid that pride, prejudice, avarice, and blood will, before long, prove the final ruin of this happy republic or land of *liberty*!!!! Can anything be a greater mockery of religion than the way in which it is conducted by the Americans? It appears as though they are bent only on daring God Almighty to do his best—they chain and handcuff us and our children, and drive us around the country like brutes, and go into the house of the God of justice to return him thanks for having aided them in their infernal cruelties inflicted upon us. Will the Lord suffer this people to go on much longer taking his holy name in vain? Will he not stop them, PREACHERS and all? O Americans! Americans!! I call God—I call angels—I call men to witness that your DESTRUCTION *is at hand* and will be speedily consummated unless you REPENT. [...]

[Hear your own Declaration of Independence!]

If any are anxious to ascertain who I am, know the world that I am one of the oppressed, degraded, and wretched sons of Africa, rendered so by the avaricious and unmerciful among the whites. [...] But remember, Americans, that as miserable, wretched, degraded, and abject as you have made us, in preceding generations and in this generation, to support you and your families, some of you (whites) on the continent of America will yet curse the day that you ever were born. You want slaves and want us for your slaves!!! My color will yet root some of you out of the very face of the earth!!!!!! [...]

See your Declaration, Americans!!! Do you understand your own language? Hear your language, proclaimed to the world, July 4, 1776: ☞ "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL!! that they *are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights*; that among these are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness!!" Compare your own language above, extracted from your Declaration of Independence, with your cruelties and the

murders inflicted by your cruel and unmerciful fathers, and yourselves, on our fathers and on us, men who have never given your fathers or you the least provocation!!!!!!

Hear your language further! ☞ “But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their *right*, it is their *duty*, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.”

Now, Americans! I ask you candidly: Were your sufferings under Great Britain one-hundredth part as cruel and tyrannical as you have rendered ours under you? Some of you, no doubt, believe that we will never throw off your murderous government and “provide new guards for our future security.” If Satan has made you believe it, will he not deceive you? * Do the whites [...] think that they can measure arms with Jehovah? Will not the Lord yet humble them? Or will not these very colored people, whom they now treat worse than brutes, yet, under God, humble them low down enough? [...]

The Americans may be as vigilant as they please, but they cannot be vigilant enough for the Lord, neither can they hide themselves where he will not find and bring them out.

* The Lord has not taught the Americans that we will not some day or other throw off their chains and handcuffs from our hands and feet, and their devilish lashes (which some of them shall have enough of yet) from off our backs.

[Footnote from the source publication]

Source: *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World [...]*, 3rd. ed. (Boston: David Walker, 1830), 39-49, 81-86, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nc01.ark:/13960/t2m62tw67>. Public domain.

Excerpts edited by John-Charles Duffy. Italicized section headings added by Duffy. Footnotes in the source publication omitted, except one. Additional paragraph breaks inserted for readability. Grammatical infelicities, typographical errors, and a slight misquotation corrected. Some parallel structures clarified by inserting words whose repetition was implied in the original. Some spelled-out numbers converted to numerals. Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and formatting of a date emended in line with modern American conventions. Instances of *&c.* converted to *etc.* Emphasis in the form of italics, all caps and small caps, multiple exclamation marks, and pointing hands retained from the source publication.

The use of lowercase for the racial labels *black*, *colored*, and *white* reproduces the usage of the source publication. The epithet *Master*, applied to Jesus, is regularly capitalized here though inconsistently so in the source. The words *promise*, *divine*, *infidel*, *camp meeting*, *reverend*, and *intemperance*, all capitalized in the source, have been converted here to lowercase for the sake of modernization; vice-versa for the geographical term *New World*.

These edited excerpts from Walker's pamphlet are intended for *teaching* purposes only. For *research* purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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